

# Cults

Notes by Franklin

- I. Introduction
  - A. Warnings From Scripture
  - B. Definitions
- II. Jehovah's Witnesses
  - A. Background
  - B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings
- III. Mormonism
  - A. Background
  - B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings
- IV. Unification Church
  - A. Background
  - B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings
- V. New Age Movements
  - A. Background
  - B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings
- VI. "Jesus Only" Churches
  - A. Background
  - B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings
- VII. Seventh-day Adventist
  - A. Background
  - B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings
- VIII. Mind Sciences
  - A. Background
  - B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings
- IX. Bibliography

# Cults

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## I. Introduction

### A. Warnings From The Scripture

1. Matthew 24: 4-5 Jesus answered: Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, I am the Christ, and will deceive many.
2. Matthew 24: 11 Many false prophets will appear and deceive many.
3. Matthew 24: 24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-- if that were possible.
4. I John 2: 18-19 Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.
5. Galatians 1: 6-9 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

### B. Definitions

1. A **cult** of Christianity is a group of people claiming to be Christian, who embrace a particular doctrinal system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or organization, which denies one or more of the central doctrines of the Christian faith as taught in the Bible.
2. **Cult** - A religious group that has these distinguishing characteristics:
  - a) A leader claiming he has been called of God and given a special message not found in the Bible.
  - b) The message is often set forth in what he calls inspired writings and is usually apocalyptic in nature. These doctrines and/or practices contradict those of the Scriptures.

- c) His leadership is authoritarian and supported by demanding a legalistic lifestyle.
  - d) The group claims their way alone is the right way.
  - e) They expect persecution from all others.
3. **Sect** - A group that separates itself from the accepted group on some principle of greater strictness, dedication or way of doing something. Usually the main principle is some aspect of the orthodox faith which is being lost, neglected, are not thought to be done appropriately. Examples include: the Quakers, Mennonites, Salvation Army, Plymouth Brethren and the Pentecostals. All of which have now moved to the more respectable classification of denominations.
4. **Denomination** - A sect that has separated from a branch of institutionalized Christianity and has established a reputation of stability and credibility in orthodoxy over time.
5. **A Fundamentalist Fringe Movement** - Doctrinally they are essentially orthodox, believing in the authority of Scripture, the Trinity, the deity of Christ and other cardinal tenets of historic Christianity. In methodology and practice they are generally authoritarian and led by domineering leaders who maintain strict control over their followers personal lives.

## II. Jehovah's Witnesses

### A. Background

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, more commonly known as Jehovah's Witnesses, was founded in the 1880s by Charles Taze Russell from Allegheny, Pennsylvania. Russell attended Presbyterian and Congregational churches as a child and found himself unable to accept their teaching about hell. Under Seventh-day Adventist influence, Russell embraced their teaching that "hell" stood for the grave and that the wicked would ultimately be annihilated, not tortured consciously for eternity. Also through Adventist influence, Russell adopted the idea that Christ's second coming was an invisible, spiritual "presence" that had already begun, rather than a literal, bodily return to take place in the future. Russell also denied the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ's deity. Russell died in 1916, believing that World War I was Armageddon.

Joseph Rutherford (died 1942), the society's legal counselor, succeeded Russell as head of the movement, and it was under his tenure that they adopted the name "Jehovah's Witnesses," from Isaiah 43:12. There are presently at least 5 million active J.W.'s worldwide. They are known for their

massive proselytizing efforts, dedicating about one billion hours per year to witnessing. That is over 200 hours per member per year. J.W.'s also distribute enormous amounts of printed literature, more so than any other cult.

## B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings

1. The **authority of the Bible** is replaced by the interpretation of their leaders to be the final authority. The writings of Russell and Rutherford take precedence over the Bible. They only use their own New World Translation which contains many changes in the wording of key passages.

**Answer:** The authority of the Scripture is recognized by Jesus Christ Himself in Luke 4:4 & 8. See also: 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 3:15-16.

2. The **Trinity** is rejected as unscriptural and the result of pagan influences.

**Answer:** See Trinity in Basic Doctrine notes of Level 1.

3. They wrongly think that wicked scribes removed **God's** proper name, Jehovah, from the Bible. They have restored the name in their, New World Translation of the Bible.

**Answer:** The most common name for the Deity is "God," which is a translation of the original Elohim (Genesis 1:1 and many other places). Elohim is a plural noun revealing the trinity. There is another name which is particularly assigned to God as His special or proper name, that is, the four letters YHWH (Exodus 3:14, Isaiah 42:8 and other places). It has not been removed from the scriptures. The Jews, because of reverence for the great sacredness of the divine name, do not and will not pronounce it. Therefore, it has been consistently translated LORD (all capital letters) in the English translations. The correct pronunciation is not known and therefore it has been pronounced as Yahwah or Jehovah. YHWH is from the Hebrew verb meaning: to be, to exist, to become.

4. They deny the deity of **Jesus Christ** teaching that He was Michael the Archangel and was the first created being. Jesus was Jehovah's agent in creating all things after he was created by Jehovah God. Although not God by nature, he is a "mighty one" and therefore may be called "a god" in a loose sense of the word. They changed their translation in John 1:1 to read: "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God, and the Word was "a" god."

**Answer:** In John 12:39-41 it states that Jesus was the one whom Isaiah saw in the temple and Isaiah 6:5 says this was Jehovah. In Revelation 1:17 the Lord Jesus Christ described Himself as "*The first and the Last*" which is the unique title of Jehovah in Isaiah 44:6 (see 1 Peter 2:8 with Isaiah 8:13-14; Revelation 2:23 with Jeremiah 17:8-10).

5. They deny the bodily **resurrection** of Christ, saying that He was raised an invisible spirit and again became an angel.  
**Answer:** Luke 24:39-43    John 20:17, 27
6. The **Holy Spirit** is not a person nor a member of the Godhead, but is Jehovah's active force, which emanates from him to accomplish his will.  
**Answer:** Acts 5:3-4
7. They do not believe that man has a **soul** which survives the death of the body. They teach we cease to exist at death but that at the Resurrection Jehovah will recreate them from his memory.  
**Answer:** 2 Corinthians 5:3-4
8. They teach that there are different **classes** of Christians with different destinies. The 144,000 of Revelation 7 & 14 are those who, along with Christ Jesus, are "born again" to exist as spirits; they will reign with Christ in heaven. The rest will live in a paradise earth with resurrected bodies.       **Answer:** Unbiblical nonsense.
9. They teach that there is no **hell** in the traditional understanding. Those sent there will be annihilated, they will not suffer or be tortured for all eternity.       **Answer:** 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9
10. **Jesus Christ's death** was as a ransom price to atone for our guilt in Adam. He was raised an invisible spirit creature, forfeiting his right to bodily, earthly life.       **Answer:** John 20:17, 27; Acts 1:9-11
11. **Salvation** is accomplished by faith in Christ Jesus plus works, such as taking in spiritual knowledge from their teaching. and doing God's kingdom work such as door to door witnessing, being baptized by them and living a moral life.       **Answer:** Titus 3:5
12. Regarding the **second coming** they reject the notion that Christ will return bodily to earth. Rather, his invisible "presence," which began in 1914, is engineering events leading to the Battle of Armageddon and the beginning of the Millennium. The Watchtower Society is known for having set several different dates for when Armageddon would occur;

after each failed prophecy, numerous disillusioned members left the movement. **Answer:** Acts 1:10-11

13. They denounce all organized religion and teach that all preachers, except themselves, are frauds and imposters.

**Answer:** See definition of cult.

14. They discourage marriage and having children because time is so short. **Answer:** Genesis 1:28

15. They do not recognize the government of any country, and they refuse to salute to the flag or have any part in war. **Answer:** Romans 13:1-7

16. They do not observe birthdays, Christmas, Easter, or any other holidays, rejecting them as pagan.

**Answer:** Luke 2:9-20; Matthew 2:1-2, 9-12; Romans 14:5-6

17. They refuse blood transfusions, based on a misunderstanding of Leviticus 17.

**Answer:** Ephesians 5:1-2 The Bible in no way teaches not to give blood. In fact we are asked to show love by sacrificing our life (which includes blood) for others.

### The testimony of a young man

I was born and raised as a Jehovah's Witness and growing up wanted nothing more than to be a minister, I wanted everyone to love God as much as I did and was baptized when I was 12.

I don't know how familiar you are with the Jehovah's Witnesses, but they believe all forms of Christianity from Christian radio to Christian books and TV to all other denominations are worshipers of the devil. You're not allowed to read any other translation of the bible but theirs (which is grossly manipulated to fit their doctrine, including changing the "Word was God" in John 1:1 to 'the Word was a god', and denying the Holy Spirit as a person by changing all references to 'God's active force,' nor are you allowed to read any other material besides the books they put out.

At the age of 16, I was disfellowshipped for playing football and asking the question about their beliefs of other denominations by asking about Luke 9:49-50. I was told not to come back until I repented and would follow their beliefs without question. I was 16 at the time and was forced to move out of my parent's house because the Witnesses are instructed to view you as dead and a follower of satan and can have nothing to do with you, even family.

That was 23 years ago and although I have tried to make contact with my family several times since, the reply has always been the same "We cannot have nothing to do with you until you come back to the Witnesses, you are dead to us".

Unfortunately when I left the Witnesses, I left God as well. I put the Bible aside and spent the next 20 so years of my life trying to prove God didn't exist with an extensive research and study of physics.

A little over a year ago, Jesus I had a very personal encounter with Jesus Christ that lead me to purchase a Bible and read the New Testament over again, but this time I read it as if I had never heard of Jesus or God, trying to see what a person would believe if he just picked it up for the first time.

I became so overwhelmed with the power of the word that I cried for days as Jesus cleansed me of all the bad doctrine, the manipulations, just everything that had happened. I rededicated my life to Him and was baptized again, this time the right way, In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit unlike the way the Witnesses do.

### **III. Mormonism**

#### **A. Background**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more commonly known as the Mormon Church, was founded by Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805 - 1844), a resident of New York state in the U.S.A. Smith claimed that God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him in 1820, informing him that all the churches were wrong and their creeds an abomination. In 1823 an angel named Moroni allegedly appeared to him, telling him of golden plates that were buried in a nearby hillside. These plates allegedly contained a record of ancient peoples who had migrated from the Near East to America. In 1827 Smith claimed that Moroni directed him to unearth the plates and begin, with supernatural help, "translating" the "Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphic" characters inscribed on them. In March 1830, Smith published the resulting "Book of Mormon," and founded his church one month later.

After Joseph Smith died at the hands of an angry mob(1844), Brigham Young (1801 - 77) took over leadership of the group, relocating the "Saints" to Utah. The current Mormon prophet is Gordon B. Hinckley. Today, the Mormon church boasts a worldwide membership of around 10 million. Mormons actively engage in missionary outreach and literature distribution. Financially prosperous, they are second only to the Roman Catholic Church in total wealth.

## Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings

1. Concerning **God**, Mormons believe in an eternal progression of many gods begetting other gods. "God the Father" is one such god, and he is the god over this planet and therefore the god with whom we look to. Therefore Mormonism is polytheistic while Christianity is strictly monotheistic. They also believe that God the Father is a man, who attained exaltation to being a god by obedience to the same gospel principles that all Mormons strive to obey. God the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as ours.
2. Mormons deny the biblical doctrine of the **trinity**, teaching that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate gods.
3. Concerning **man**, Mormons teach that he is a god "in embryo" and may attain exaltation to a god as his heavenly father has. God and man are of the same "species," with god being the exalted and glorified state of the man. Before their birth into this present world, all human beings preexisted in heaven as spiritual progeny of a father and mother god and goddess. They have no memory of their previous existence in the spirit realm. This pre-existent life was a period of probation. Those who were less faithful, or valiant during this period of probation are born on this earth with black skin. If sufficiently obedient to Mormon teaching and certain practices, they will achieve exaltation. Those exalted will inhabit a planet and procreate spirit children, continuing the same cycle.
4. Concerning **Jesus Christ**, Mormons teach that he is Lucifer's spirit brother because they were procreated by the same parents in his preexistent state, before his incarnation. They deny the virgin birth, teaching instead that the human body of Jesus was the product of actual sexual intercourse between God the Father and Mary. They teach that the Father is a man with a physical body. His divinity is not unique since it is the same as that which any man may attain. Thus it is also held that Christ's incarnation is not unique for all the gods, after having first existed as spirits, came to earth to receive bodies before they advanced to being a god.
5. Concerning **Salvation**, Mormons deny the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace, teaching instead that we can attain salvation through "repentance, baptism, faith, and good works." Christ's atoning work brings about the resurrection of all mankind, but it cannot pay for all a person's sins or guarantee exaltation. While Christ's work is the beginning of salvation, human works are needed to complete the process. Depending on those works, people will achieve one of three levels on heaven: the telestial, the



terrestrial, or the celestial. Temple marriage is required for one to attain the celestial kingdom, the highest level.

6. In addition to the Kings James version of the Bible, the Mormon Church uses the following sacred books as its main **source of authority**: the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and the Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price. It is also believed that the president of the church may receive revelations for the guidance of the church as a whole. **Answer:** By adding to the Bible their own additional sacred books, Mormons have placed themselves outside of historic Christianity, which recognizes the Bible alone as the final source of authority.
7. Mormons claim to be the only true Church possessing all the divine revelations. They maintain that the entire Christian Church was apostate until 1830, at which time it was restored under the leadership of Joseph Smith.
8. Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, is said to have been ordained to be God's infallible prophet before he was born.
9. Mormons believe that the fall of man was a fall upward. If Adam had not eaten the forbidden fruit, he would have had no children. Because he ate the forbidden fruit man is now able to propagate the race.
10. Mormons practice baptism for the dead. A living Mormon can be baptized on behalf of another who has died without being baptized. They also believe in communion with the dead in the privacy of the temple and under the supervision of the priest-hood.
11. Mormons still hold on to plural marriage, also teaching celestial marriages. These being not only for his life but for heaven as well. Many Mormons believe that Christ was married to Mary and Martha.
12. Mormons believe in a literal millennium during which Christ will reign over the earth from two capitals: Jerusalem and Independence Missouri.

## **IV. Unification Church**

### **A. Background**

The founder and current leader of the Unification Church is Sun Myung Moon. Moon claims that in 1936, when he was sixteen, Jesus Christ appeared to him and declared that Moon would complete the mission Jesus had only begun.

In 1946 Moon was arrested by the North Korean police and, Moon claims, tortured for his faith. Released and then sentenced again to prison, he managed to escape to the south during the Korean War. He founded his church in South Korea in 1954, which he named the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (most commonly known as simply the Unification Church). In 1957, Moon published the *Divine Principle*, which is the main authoritative work setting forth Unification theology.

In 1959 the group spread to the United States. Moon drew his biggest following in America in the 1970s, where his movement gained considerable media attention, much of it negative. Controversies swirled around alleged unethical recruitment and fund-raising tactics and Moon's authoritarian leadership style. In 1982 Moon began serving eighteen months in federal prison on tax-evasion charges.

The Unification Church has somewhere between one and two million members, of whom ten to thirty thousand reside in the United States. By far the largest concentration of "Moonies," as they are commonly called by outsiders, is in Korea and Japan. The church runs the Unification Theological Seminary in New York and has considerable business holdings, including the well-known daily newspaper the *Washington Times*.

## **B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings**

1. Concerning **divine revelation**, the Unification Church teaches that God has revealed his truth to Moon, God's source of spiritual truth for this present age. Moon's truth is especially found in the *Divine Principle*, which is the "third testament" of the Bible; it is as considered even more authoritative than the Bible.
2. Concerning **sin**, Moon teaches that God's original plan was for Adam and Eve to mature spiritually and then to procreate a sinless human race. However, Satan thwarted this plan by seducing Eve to have illicit sexual intercourse with him; this led to the spiritual corruption of mankind. Then, when Adam in turn had sex with Eve (before reaching spiritual maturity), this led to mankind's physical corruption.
3. **Salvation** therefore requires both spiritual and physical redemption. Jesus Christ came to earth to accomplish both elements: He was to marry and produce a sinless race, which would be redeemed both physically and spiritually. However, because the Jews rejected him, Jesus could not accomplish man's total salvation and so was only able to secure spiritual salvation by dying on the cross. It therefore remains for a second messiah, the "Lord of the Second Advent," to provide physical salvation. Most Unification Church members identify Moon as the Lord of the Second

Advent. Moon's mission is to produce a perfect family. His twelve children are considered sinless. He is to extend this perfection to his followers through their obedience to him, such as having their marriages arranged and blessed by Moon.

4. Concerning **Jesus Christ**, Moon denies that Jesus is truly God or equal to the Father, though he did attain perfection and is in that sense "divine."
5. The biblical doctrine of the **Trinity** is denied.
6. Christ's **resurrection** was not physical, nor does it accomplish our physical redemption. Christ was raised as a spirit, and his resurrection accomplishes the redemption of our spirits.
7. Regarding the **afterlife**, Moon teaches that hell is ruled by Satan and is the place where the spirits of the dead who have rejected God dwell temporarily. Since the Lord of the Second Advent will eventually redeem all mankind, hell will be abolished. Ultimately, all human beings will become divine spirits and dwell in heaven with God.

## V. New Age Movement

### A. Background

The New Age movement is defined as "a loosely structured network of individuals and organizations who share a vision of a new age of enlightenment and harmony (the 'Age of Aquarius') and who subscribe to a common 'worldview.'" This worldview entails the ideas that all is one (monism), that all is God (pantheism), and that people can experience this oneness with the divine (mysticism). The New Age movement (NAM) is highly diverse and decentralized. There is no person, group of people, or organization that speaks for it, much less a well-organized, orchestrated conspiracy. Rather, because of their shared core philosophy, New Agers cooperate to varying degrees and in varying ways to promote their common interests.

The NAM gathers its beliefs from varied sources combining different and often contradictory elements into their beliefs. The New Age philosophy has entered into many different areas of life, including health care, such as "holistic health," psychology, science, politics (one world government), education and business. Because of the movement's diversity, the number of New Age practitioners is impossible to determine. There are more than three thousand publishers of New Age and occult books, journals, and magazines.

## B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings

1. New Agers believe that the **Bible**, especially the teachings of Jesus, contains hidden, secret, meanings only understood by a few of them. They believe that when the Bible is properly understood it supports the New Age worldview that all is one, all is God, and man is God.
2. Concerning **revelation**, they believe the various world's religions and great religious teachers all affirm the New Age truths of pantheism, monism, and human divinity. Revelations may also come today from a variety of extra dimensional beings, including disembodied humans such as ascended masters. These revelations are typically "channeled" through an individual who becomes controlled by the spiritual entity revealing the information.
3. New Agers believe that **Jesus Christ** is one of many enlightened individuals who have revealed God's truth to humanity. They make a sharp distinction between Jesus and the Christ. "Jesus" refers to the literal man Jesus, while "the Christ" is often defined as a cosmic, divine entity that indwelt the man Jesus. Some New Agers also teach that Jesus went East and attained enlightenment through the teaching of Eastern gurus. Thus enlightened, Jesus became a "way-shower," much as other holy men such as Buddha and Krishna.
4. Concerning **God**, New Agers hold to a pantheistic conception. That is, God is all and all is God. God is not seen as personal but is variously described as an impersonal Force, or Cosmic Consciousness, or Energy.
5. In their doctrine of **man**, New Agers affirm human divinity. Since all is God (pantheism) and all is one (monism), it follows that man - like everything else - is part of this divine oneness. Being god, man has unlimited potential and can even create his own reality.
6. **Salvation** in New Age thinking is unnecessary. Since New Agers deny the concept of sin, there is no need to be saved from it. It also follows that Jesus Christ could not have atoned for sin. People are not hindered in life by sin but by failing to recognize their own divinity, hence the need for enlightenment, not salvation. New Agers typically affirm the doctrine of **reincarnation**, through which a person is ultimately reunited with God.

## VI. "Jesus Only" Churches

### A. Background

"**Jesus only**" churches are so called because they reject the triune baptismal formula (that is, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), baptizing instead only in Jesus' name. They are also called "**Oneness**" churches because they believe not only that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in substance (which is correct) but also that they are one in person (which is not correct). Thus, Jesus is the Father, Jesus is the Spirit, the Spirit is the Father, etc. This teaching is also known as "modalism" because the one God, who they say is also one person, manifests himself successively in three different "modes."

The churches considered here came out of the Assemblies of God (AG) in the early 1900's. In 1916 the AG adopted a doctrinal statement that clearly stipulated trinitarian belief, thus forcing out Oneness adherents, who then formed their own denominations and associations. Although there are about ninety different Oneness denominations, the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) is by far the largest, with just over one million members worldwide.

### B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings

1. Concerning **Christ**, Oneness adherents believe that Jesus is fully God. However, they claim that Jesus is the Father and the Holy Spirit, arguing that in the incarnation "all of God: became incarnate. As noted, this is a reintroduction of the ancient heresy known as modalism.
2. As to **Jesus' Sonship**, they maintain that Jesus is the Son (in any sense of the term - either "Son of Man" or "Son of God") only in his incarnation. According to them, the term "Son" refers strictly to Christ's human nature. Thus, Oneness believers deny Christ's eternal, preexistent Sonship. Before the incarnation, God could be designated as the "Word" - who is also the Father - but not as Son. At the incarnation, God assumed the role of Son for the purpose of redemption, but this role will have a definite end (that is, at the end of the age).
3. Oneness theology denies as illogical and unscriptural the **personal distinctions in the Godhead**. Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are all one and the same person. Bible verses that appear to reveal distinctions between Jesus and the Father or the Holy Spirit actually reveal distinctions between the divine and human natures of the incarnate Jesus. **Answer:** 1 John 4:14; John 14:16-17

4. Concerning **salvation**, Oneness writers agree with historic orthodoxy in affirming that one must be "born again" in order to be saved. However, contrary to the biblical teaching of justification by faith alone, Oneness theology asserts that the new birth takes place through faith, repentance, water baptism, and baptism in the Holy Spirit.  
**Answer:** John 1:12; 3:15-16
5. **Water baptism**, which is indispensable to salvation, must be by immersion and administered in the name of Jesus only. **Answer:** The thief on the cross: Luke 23:42-43.
6. Likewise, **baptism in the Holy Spirit** is essential to salvation and never occurs without the "initial evidence" of speaking in tongues. **Answer:** Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 12:30

## VII. Seventh-day Adventists

### A. Background

A controversy has raged for decades as to whether this religious group is a cult. Authorities on the subject have taken both sides. No one says that the Seventh-day Adventists are "cultic" to the same degree as the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, for example. However, the history, and even present-day doctrine, of this group could be said to have cultic characteristics.

In many respects, William Miller, a licensed Baptist minister in the USA, might be labeled the forerunner of Seventh-day Adventism even though he himself was not connected with the movement. It was his date setting for the second coming of Christ, which raised the curiosity of Christians and contributed to the widespread prophetic speculation in the 1830's and early 1840's. From this also came the name, "Adventists."

When nothing happened on 22 October 1844 a period referred to as "the Great Disappointment" set in and others began to make adjustments. One adjustment that came in a vision the very next day was that Christ was not coming to earth on that date but entered the Holy of Holies to "blot out the sins" of believers who had died. This was further developed later and eventually became the doctrine of "**investigative judgment**" which gives the movement cultic attributes.

The visionary, Ellen G. White seems to be the major force behind the formation of the Seventh-day Adventists. She is given credit for solidifying the scattered Millerites and Adventists into a cohesive denomination. Two months after the Great Disappointment the seventeen year old had her first vision. She saw the Adventists on the road to heaven and those who doubted the Adventist truth were rejected. Her next vision, two months later, was an expansion on the first vision stating that God closed the door of salvation to sinners on 22 October. Her next vision confirmed the seventh-day Sabbath that Joseph Bates was promoting. For the next few years she and the small band of fellow believers were designated the 'sabbatarian and shut door' Adventists.

This was a period of many self-ascribed prophets of which White rose above the rest by offering divine confirmation to individuals who needed their positions strengthened. She would sink to the floor in a swoon that extended anywhere from a few minutes to hours. When the vision was ended she was then limp and without strength and had to be assisted to her chair. At one point, her husband, James White a lay Adventist preacher, backed away from his strong endorsement of her. The grassroots support for his wife, however, was stronger than he realized, and he was asked to step down from his position and later to apologize for depreciating his wife's visions. From then on Mrs. White had virtual full reign in presenting her visionary messages.

## **B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings**

1. **Investigative Judgment** - Many Seventh-day Adventists could not tell you what this teaching is and many of their pastors do not teach it. However, a significant portion of the denomination's statement of Beliefs is devoted to this doctrine. Article twenty-three of the 1980 revision of this Statement affirms that "in 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2,300 days," Jesus "entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry" and that is "a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin. . . ." and it is continuing today. As Ellen White explained, as names come before the Lord their good and bad deeds, as listed in the "books" spoken of in Revelation 20:12 are "closely investigated." During this time of judgment, "names are accepted, names are rejected." Those rejected are ones who "have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven." Those accepted are "all who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice . . . and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God." Only those will have their sins "blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life."

**Answer:** There is no scripture whatsoever to back this speculation.

2. The death and shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross was sufficient for the forgiveness of sin, but not the **blotting out of sin**. They explain: "The actual blotting out of sin, could not take place the moment when a sin is forgiven, because subsequent deeds and attitudes may affect the final decision. Instead, the sin remains on the record until the life is complete - in fact, the Scriptures indicate it remains until the judgment." Even after the name of a completed life has gone before the investigative judgment and been accepted, the sin is still not entirely blotted out. That does not happen until Jesus places the sins "upon satan, who, in the execution of the judgment, must bear the final penalty" because he is "the originator and instigator of sin. The scapegoat, bearing the sins of Israel was sent away, so satan bearing the guilt of all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit, will be for a thousand years confined to the earth."

**Answer:** This doctrine denies the finished work of the death and shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. This doctrine more than any other separates Seventh-day Adventists from mainline evangelicals.

3. **Worshipping on Saturday** became an important aspect after a defense was written entitled *The Seventh-day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign*. It was later expanded to include warnings that, those who will receive a mark on their forehead for worshipping the beast and his image to be those people who would follow the Papacy (the beast) in Sunday worship. He said the Sabbath had been changed to Sunday by the Roman Catholic Church. They argue that the basic principles of the Decalogue or Ten Commandments are unchanged and unchangeable.

**Answer:** The Church began meeting for worship on the first day of the week soon after the resurrection. John 20:1; Acts 20:7;

1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10. Hebrews 4:9 indicates that the spirit of Sabbath is the rest entered into when a person is born again and ceases from his works to obtain salvation.

4. The belief in "**soul sleep**" is another aspect of Adventist doctrine that is often challenged by Bible scholars outside the movement. They teach that the soul as well as the body is in a state of unconsciousness: "Death is really and truly a sleep, that is deep, that is unconscious, that is unbroken until the awakening at the resurrection," writes Carlyle Haynes. He argues that "the language of the Bible makes clear that it is the whole man which sleeps, not merely a part. No intimation is given that man sleeps only as to his body, and that he is wakeful and conscious as to his soul."

**Answer:** John 11:11-14; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:21-14



5. **Eternal Punishment** They reject the teaching of the Bible as to a conscious and everlasting punishment of nonbelievers in hell. In *Questions on Doctrine*, first published in 1957, they give **five reasons for their position**.

(1) Because everlasting life is a gift of God (Romans 6:23). The wicked to not possess this. They "shall not see life" (John 3:36); "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (1 John 3:15).

**Answer:** This is correct. They do not have eternal life, they have eternal death, eternal separation from God. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9

(2) Because eternal torment would perpetuate and immortalize sin, suffering, and woe, and contradict, we believe, divine revelation, which envisions the time when these things shall be no more (Revelation 21:4).

**Answer:** The scripture they refer to is in the "new heaven and new earth." Indeed, sinners will have no part in it. Verse 8 declares that their place is in the "lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," separated from God and life forever (Revelation 20:10).

(3) Because it seems to us to provide a plague spot in the universe of God throughout eternity, and would seem to indicate that it is impossible for God Himself ever to abolish it.

**Answer:** Silly. "Nothing is impossible with God." They are placing their reasoning over God's and in direct opposition to what He has declared to be His plan

(4) Because in our thinking it would detract from the attribute of love as seen in the character of God, and postulates the concept of a wrath which is never appeased.

**Answer:** The breadth and length and height and depth of God's Love is expressed and available to all "whoever believes" John 3:16. But for those who reject Jesus and do not believe, "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides (present continuous tense) on him" forever. This is eternal death, separation from God.

(5) Because the Scriptures teach that the atoning work of Christ is to "put away sin" (Hebrews 9:26), first from the individual, and ultimately from the universe. The full fruition of Christ's sacrificial, atoning work will be seen not only in a redeemed people but in a restored heaven and earth (Ephesians 1:14).

**Answer:** Yes, their statement is true. But, it does not rule out the fact that the "lake of fire" where all the unbelieving sinners, the devil, the

beast and false prophet are, "will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Revelation 20:10

## VIII. Mind Sciences

### A. Background

The "mind sciences" comprise several different cults that share a common philosophical outlook on God and the nature of reality. They are called "mind sciences" because they speak of God as "Divine Mind," an impersonal principle. Mind science groups teach that Divine Mind constitutes the whole of reality; the material world either does not exist or is otherwise an aspect of Divine Mind. Thus, mind science teaching is pantheistic, God is in all that exists.

We will consider only the three largest groups.

**Christian Science** (CS) was founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879. Her views are set forth in her *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. "Metaphysical healing" was an important of her teaching and is a crucial component of CS belief. At present there are about 250,000 Christian Scientists.

**Religious Science** (RS), also known as Science of Mind, was founded by Ernest Holmes in 1927. His main work is entitled *Science of Mind*. They have about 600,000 members and is the fastest-growing mind science cult.

**Unity School of Christianity** (USC) was founded by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore in the late 1800's. There are about 110,000 members in more that 300 churches worldwide.

### B. Summary of Non-Biblical Teachings

#### 1. Concerning **revelation**:

Unity School of Christianity and Religious Science teach that truth is found in the "Bibles" of many religions, though it is taught most clearly and fully in their own group. These "Bibles," including the Christian Bible, must be interpreted metaphysically. That is, there is nothing that really exists.

Christian Science differs, claiming that "true Christianity" can only be understood through Eddy's *Science and Health*.

2. **God** is seen as Divine Mind: impersonal yet individual. God, "It," is a triply divine Principle or Mind: Life, Truth, and Love. God is "All-in-all." Everything in the universe is a unified Whole, expressed as "all is one."
3. Christian Science denies the existence of the **material world**; it is an illusion, it does not really exist. Religious Science and Unity School of Christianity affirm the reality of the matter, but say that the material universe is God's Body; he is in everything but greater than everything (panentheism).
4. **Jesus** was merely a human man, a divine idea, or an idea of God, in bodily form. Jesus was the Son of God but not God the Son (as Trinitarians affirm). Jesus was not the Christ; rather, "Christ" refers to "the divine manifestation of God, which comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error." Religious Science specifically affirm that Jesus became the Christ, as all people can become. According to them, the Christ is the Higher Self of every individual. All mind science groups teach that Jesus is our Way-shower to salvation, but he cannot save us. Jesus was a master metaphysician who taught the truths of Divine Science. His teachings must be interpreted metaphysically.
5. **Human Beings** are perfect, without sin (since sin is unreal), and eternal. They are part of God. Religious Science and Unity School of Christianity teach that man's body, like all other matter, is a manifestation of Divine Mind.
6. Concerning **Christ's death and resurrection**, since death is an illusion, Christ did not die on the cross. Consequently, bodily resurrection was and is unnecessary.
7. **Sin**, matter, evil, disease and death are unreal and an illusion; they are merely destructive forms of thought.
8. Man already has ever-lasting **salvation**; there is no final judgment. "Salvation" is being saved from the error that sin, sickness, and death exist. People must overcome their ignorance and realize that they are already one with God. Additionally, Christian Science asserts that there is no way into the kingdom of heaven except through the practice of Christian Science.
9. Unique to United School of Christianity is the teaching of **reincarnation**. After bodily death, the soul falls asleep until its next incarnation. Successive rebirths take the form of another human being. Each

incarnation is to work out one's "karma" and to progress to the next level of existence, eventually culminating in eternal life.

## **IX. Bibliography**

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